

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 202019Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TDSECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7442

INFO ZEN AMEMBASSY LIMA

ZEN AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

ZEN AMEMBASSY QUITO

UNCAS SECRION 2 OF 2 ASUNCION 2095/2

6. DRSM THOMAS AND NOTTINGHAM AND RESIDENT DISCIPLES OF CHRIST REPRESENTATIVES WORKED IN CLOSEST HARMONY WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND HIS STAFF THOUGHOUT THE VISIT. THE AMBASSY ASSISTED THE CHURCH'S LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES TO OBTAIN AUDIENCES WITH INTERIOR MINISTER MONTANARO AND HIS DEPUTY, DR.BESTARD, AND THROUGH THEM WITH POLICE INVESTIGATIONS CHIEF PASTOR CORONEL, PRIOR TO DR. THOMAS' ARRIVAL. THE AMBASSADOR USED HIS GOOD OFFICES TO SECURE FURTHER MEETINGS FOR DRS THOMAS AND NOTTINGHAM WITH MINISTER MONTANARO, DR.BESTARD AND WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CHURCH AFFAIRS PENA (WHO IS CONCURRENTLY ACTING FOREIGN MINISTERLV AND ALSO ARRANGED FOR THE MEETING BETWEEN DRS . THOMAS AND NOTTINGHAM AND PRESIDENT STROESSNER, WHICH HE HIMSELF ATTENDED. DURING THIS MEETING PERMISSION WAS GIVEN FOR DR. NOTTINGHAM TO VISIT TWO OF THE PARAGUAYAN PRISONERS IN JAIL, A PRIVILEGE NOT NORMALLY GRANTED.

7. THE PROBLEM AFFLICTING THE MISION DE AMISTAD WERE AGGRAVATED ON THE EVE OF DR. THOMAS' MEETING WITH PRESIDENT STROESSNER WHEN POLICE, APPARENTLY WITHOUT HIGH LEVEL AUTHORIZATION, ARRESTED MESRS VACA AND GILCHRIST. STRENUOUS REPRESENTATION WERE MADE BY THE EMBASSY AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, RESULTING IN THEIR RELEASE THE NEXT DAY. DURING HIS DETENTION MR. GILCHRIST WAS VISITED BY MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY STAFF TO ENSURE HIS ( AND MR. VACA'S) PROPER TREATMENT. (WE UNCLASSIFIED

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ALSO CONTACTED THE ECUADOREAN AMBASSADOR , WHO WAS PREPARED TO INTERVENE BUT THIS WAS MADE UNNECESSARY BY MR. VACA'S RELEASE.)

8. ALTHOUGH THE PROBLEM FACING THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST CHURCH IN PARAGUAY CAN NOT BE SAID TO HAVE BEEN RESOLVED, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE VISIT OF MR. THOMAS AND THE

VERY POSITIVE AND CORRECT MANNER IN WHICH HE AND HIS RESIDENT STAFF HAVE PROCEEDED HAVE BEEN MOST HELPFUL. DRS. THOMAS AND NOTTINGHAM TOLD US THAT WHILE THEY DID NOT FEEL COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF THEIR VISIT , THEY WERE HOPEFUL THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF INDIVIDUAL THEIR PEOPLE WOULD BE EXONERATED. WHAT DRS. THOMAS AND NOTTINGHAM DID ACCOMPLISH WAS TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF HIGHEST GOP OFFICIALS THE GENUINE CONCERN OF THIS IMPORTANT AND INFLUENTIAL AMERICAN RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS FOR THE CONTINUED VIABILITY OF ALL ITS ACTIVITES IN PARAGUAY, THE COLEGIO INTERNACIONAL INCLUDED. ALL CONCERNED APPEAR NOW TO BE FULLY SENSITIVE TO THE NEED TO PREVENT AND DISPUTE BETWEEN THE DICIPLES OF CHRIST AND THE GOP FROM ESCALTING INTO AN INTERNATIONAL CAUSE CELEBRE.

9. ON HIS DEPARTURE FROM ASUNCION DR. THOMAS WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO EXPRESS HIS APPRCIATION TO THE AMBASSADOR AND TO HIS STAFF FORTHEIR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE. FROM THE EMBASSY'S STANDPOINT, ANY HELP WE MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE WAS MADE MUCH EASIER BY DR. THOMAS'S OWN HIGHLY COOPERATIVE AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE.  
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